

A catch-up issue, "filled with echoes of echoes. Reports of reports. Clippings. There seemed to be no edge, no sense that any of this was leading to anything." (Ron Rosenbaum on EOC, Texas Monthly, Nov. 1983 [#1983.199])

First, a small sampling of articles from a large pile on my desk. Some interesting commentary, some typical anniversary stories, and even some new facts. I'm saving a lot for later issues, including many stories by or about buffs.

Clippings:

31. 23 Aug 83 (UPI) "[Aquino] Assassination Inquiry Sought" Rep. Stephen Solarz "called yesterday for a Warren Commission-type inquiry on possible involvement of the Marcos government in the killing." Such an inquiry "was the only way to clear" the Philippine government. To be fair to Solarz: the language quoted here is that of the UPI reporter; Solarz may not have said anything quite so silly. He may well understand that the WC can't be held up as "an impartial and independent investigation, free of government control."

32. Nov 1983 (Garry Wills, The Movies) "Conspiracy Madness" [4 pp.] An essay on "Blow-Up," "Executive Action," and other recent conspiracy movies. "In the thirties, we got escapist euphoria. In the seventies, escapist paranoia." The motives of the plotters in "Executive Action" do not really make sense, Wills argues. There are no such films about the MLK assassination; "black-white relations are touchy, edged, and dangerous." "People do not go to these movies because they care so much for the fallen victims that they want to find the perpetrators of the deed. They go because they care so little about them that they are content to see old nightmares put to the service of a morbid escapism."

33. 11-17 Nov 83 (C. Fager, D.C. City Paper) "JFK: The Legacy - The Other Side of Camelot" [3 pp.] A "big caveat to the coming apotheosis of Camelot and its martyred leader ... the character and personality of the man who occupied the White House from 1961 to 1963 were not only important inside its fences, but outside them as well." "The internal dynamics of the New Left and civil rights movements, during and after the Kennedy administration, displayed an almost eerie contrapuntal set of stylistic parallels with life inside Camelot: the sexual predation by leading males, their persistent tendency toward manipulation of 'participatory democracy' for covert elite ends; the cumulative load of hypocrisy that went along with concealing both these traits; and, not least, the derisive laughter and scorn with which they hooted down the many early attempts by activist women to raise feminist concerns within movement groups." The author, as a junior civil-rights worker, first heard of JFK's womanizing "from one of King's inner circle ... in the context of rationalizing the similar behavior of some of Dr. King's men." I'm listing this article here because it was perhaps the most provocative of the many anniversary evaluations of JFK, not because it was the most balanced or persuasive one; even the author admits that he might be pushing his thesis too far.

34. 20 Nov 83 (Kirsch, LAT) A brief review of David Scheim's book. "With meticulous, sometimes slightly maniacal attention to detail, Scheim weaves a web of circumstantial evidence that certainly points to the culpability of what he loosely calls 'the Mob' But does he prove it? Unhappily for those who cannot tolerate historical ambiguity, he does not.... In the end, Scheim proves only that the Kennedy assassination is far beyond the reach of mere history - long since passed into the realm of myth, where we may find devils or angels but no simple truths."

35. 20 Nov 83 (Kent Biffle, DMN) "Eyewitness to tragedy: The inside stories of how a band of reporters covered Kennedy's assassination" [6 pp.] A good general account of what happened, based on contemporary recollections, "most ... published here for the first time." New to me: reporter Jim Ewell

heard Roy Truly tell detectives that Oswald was the only employee unaccounted for at a roll call - not the first one, according to Ewell's impression, but one when Oswald was already under arrest. For an introduction to the evidentiary problems surrounding the roll calls and the police reaction, see Meagher, p. 85. Ewell was not a WC or known HSCA witness; perhaps his original account or his memory contains significant information.

36. 21 Nov 83 (WP) Two items, reflecting a peculiar consensus:

(UPI) "JFK Is Favorite President, [Newsweek-Gallup] Poll Says" Two-thirds "said American society would be much different if Kennedy had not been killed, and three out of every four said they do not believe" LHO acted alone.

(Reuter) "Soviets Assess Death of JFK" According to commentary in a "leading Soviet daily," JFK "was in the final analysis removed by those who placed him in his post. For the leading circles of the U.S.A. he remained a 'model president' until he began, albeit timidly, to encroach on their interests." Among the candidates: the CIA, the Pentagon, Cuban emigres.

Can 50 million Americans and some leading Russians all be wrong? It's certainly possible. Can anyone find out if Gallup asked who people thought was behind the assassination? And does he ask control questions - e.g., how many think FDR's death was the result of a conspiracy?

37. 22 Nov 83 (National Enquirer) [9 pp.] A special section, including (among other things) items #38 through 41 and 71.

38. 22 Nov 83 (Nat. Enq.) "21% of [100] Congressmen polled doubt Oswald was only assassin," and 17 more weren't sure that the Warren Report was correct. Does that mean that 62% reject the HSCA findings, or did some simply reject the Enquirer's pollster? Or, perhaps, can some members of the House manage to believe both the Warren Commission and the HSCA?

39. 22 Nov 83 (Nat. Enq.) "Do you think there was a conspiracy behind JFK murder? Phone in your vote" Sorry, it's too late to vote now; see #52.

40. 22 Nov 83 (Nat. Enq.) "More people recognize Oswald than V.P. Bush" from their pictures. That's George Bush - who, in the photo used by the Enquirer, was presumably not wearing his cloak and dagger and holding an issue of Reader's Digest.

41. 22 Nov 83 (Nat. Enq.) "Just released - Russia's official version of the assassination: The CIA did it!" [2 pp.] The CIA plus "the Pentagon, the Mafia, defense contractors and big U.S. oil companies," that is. The CIA also tampered with JFK's brain before the official autopsy, and later killed RFK. All this is in a book entitled "Echo of the Shots in Dallas" - a good title, at least. (Does anyone have a copy, or a translation?) Scary, when you think about it, that the Russians may not understand other things about this country any better than they seem to understand the JFK case.

42. 22 Nov 83 (CNN) A transcript of the "Freeman Reports" broadcast, with David Scheim, Jean Davison, and me. [15 pp.] Pretty much what you would expect, if you are familiar with the Scheim and Davison books and with my comments on them in EOC. I tried to come across as the "reasonable man" in the middle, not totally convinced by any theory but confident that productive work on the case could still be done.

An hour (less commercials) goes by very quickly, but I did manage to mention some of the Army Intelligence issues. Davison said that the matter of the destroyed Army file is "fairly clear-cut, unless one wants to take a suspicious view of it." I agreed, saying that I was still suspicious, like many people. Davison indicated that the contradictory nature and directions of much of the alleged conspiracy evidence helped lead her to the conclusion that there was no conspiracy at all. I suggested that our background as scientists gave Scheim and me the training and patience to sift through apparently contradictory evidence.

43. 22 Nov 83 (S. Smyth, Irish Independent) "Marina Oswald: why I need Jackie to forgive me" [2 pp.] Jackie still appears in her dreams, with Marina asking forgiveness. "I feel guilty about the grief I brought to the Kennedys,

but I try not to; it was none of my doing. It was very hard to shed that [guilt] feeling.'" I think this is the most substantial 20th-anniversary interview of Marina I have seen. "'I do not see how Lee could possibly have acted alone. There was certainly a conspiracy to kill the president.'" Also, Marina is not totally convinced (despite the exhumation) that Lee was in the grave!

44. 22 Nov 83 (Knickerbocker News [Albany, NY]) "Area woman recalls seeing dreams of millions crushed" [2 pp.] A thoughtful account by Mary Woodward Pillsworth, in 1963 a DMN reporter and Kennedy fan. Nothing of substance new; she explains that she has declined to cooperate with conspiracy theorists. Woodward's original impression, which she does not disavow, was of shots from the grassy knoll. (Mark Lane brought this to the attention of the Warren Commission; see 2 WCH 43 and CE 2084.)

45. 25 Nov 83 (SFC) "Prototype Terrorist As Prickly Loner" A very favorable review of "Oswald's Game" by Larry Tool, who "has taught American political history at Rutgers." "Davison's portrait of this pathetic and appalling man reminds us that we have more to fear from anarchy than from conspiracy." (Political science can be a bit frightening too.)

* 46. 25 Nov 83 (Texas Observer) "Hoover Dammed Kennedy Probe," by Earl Golz. [2 pp., as reprinted in Coverups, 3/84] Among other things, this article touches on Nosenko and Fedora, Oswald's contact with Kostikov (including Hosty's comments on the FBI's reaction), the attempted suppression of Oswald's Minox camera, and the Banister connection. Golz developed some of these stories himself in recent years.

Blakey "is chagrined over what he expects from Justice.... 'I have been in contact with people I know in the Bureau. And they don't intend to do anything.... There's no profit in it for them. They can't solve this case now.... The case is just too old to solve, in the sense of indictments and convictions.'" The Justice Department people "just don't want [the] embarrassment" of admitting that they could not solve the case.

Golz's overall analysis focuses heavily on the FBI. "Neither Oswald nor the others [Ruby, Warren, LBJ] should be blamed for the lingering malady [of controversy and distrust of government]. Blame instead J. Edgar Hoover. The FBI director was deathly afraid that the Warren Commission would find an assassination conspiracy." I would probably be less hostile to this view if the legendary Epstein had not puffed it up for his own purposes. I'm no fan of Hoover, but he was not as far from the political mainstream as, for example, NBC's November miniseries would have it. Nor can he be blamed for all aspects of the coverups and investigations. Golz's view seems strongly influenced by Hosty, who clearly was an undeserving victim of Hoover's defensiveness. Hoover's failure to tell the Warren Commission about the CIA plots against Castro is not in the same category of sin as the CIA's failure to do so (or even the WC's failure to pursue what had, after all, been alleged in newspaper accounts). True, the FBI didn't give the WC the administrative pages mentioning Oswald's refusal to take a polygraph test, but key WC staffers knew that they had not seen all the FBI's Oswald documents, and it was the Commission's responsibility to press for them if they were deemed necessary.

47. 26 Nov 83 (AP in WP; also in BG) "RFK Said to Have Kept Johnson From Oval Office After JFK's Death" (Based on an article in the L.A. Herald Examiner which I do not have, by a history professor at Rice.) In a 1969 interview, LBJ said he thought "Kennedy 'seriously considered whether he would let me be president, whether he should really take the position, the vice president didn't automatically move in.'" It's hard to tell what, if anything, this flap was really about. It has been known that RFK was upset when LBJ wanted to use the office early on the 23rd, and he said in 1964 that several matters in the days after the assassination "made [him] bitterer" with LBJ.

The "newly discovered" LBJ interview is "now available" at the LBJ Library.

There is probably much more unstudied or unavailable material, more directly relevant to the assassination, there and at the JFK Library.

48. 28 Nov 83 (People) "The assassination has shadowed - but not defeated - the family of Lee Harvey Oswald," by June Oswald Porter. [5 pp.; #48B: photo, 1 p.] Nothing new about the shooting itself, but interesting. June is sorry that she never met Marguerite Oswald. She wanted her papers, but Robert gave them to Texas Christian University. June has mixed feelings about the assassination buffs: "Some, no doubt, are motivated by sadness and a sense of injustice, while others seem driven just because it is something to do, a game, an obsession. I don't think it should consume anyone's whole life." As a daughter, she would like to believe Lee was innocent, but she is "as unsure of the facts as the next person."

49. 29 Nov 83 (Village Voice) "Camelot & Creeps," by Eliot Fremont-Smith [2 pp.] Sort of a book review, mostly of the recent Manchester and Ralph Martin books on JFK, with a few words about Davison and others. Idiosyncratic at best; I can't even tell who the titular creeps are supposed to be. Smith, who was impressed by the Summers book but hated Lifton's (see #1980.194 and #1981.10), is now particularly unhappy about Manchester and Ruby. "It was his [Ruby's] act, far more than Oswald's, that unified us, made us for a moment a very tiny country, everybody knowing each other; his act that turned trauma into tragedy."

50. 8 Dec 83 (Rolling Stone) "American Blood: A Journey through the Labyrinth of Dallas and JFK," by Don DeLillo [7 pp.; #50B: poor copy of accompanying drawings, 2 pp.] If you thought the last RS article on the JFK case (on LHO and LSD) was a bit far out, you ought to see this. It is somewhere between impressionistic and incomprehensible. "What has become unraveled since that afternoon in Dallas is not the plot, of course, not the dense mass of characters and events, but the sense of a coherent reality most of us shared." DeLillo is, I gather, a novelist, and his sense of a coherent reality may never have been the same as mine. Some basic facts, commonly believed non-facts, and conspiracy theories have gyrated in DeLillo's brain and ended up in this article. He seems fascinated by the official interest in Oswald's pubic hairs, and even mentions Ruby's mother's dental chart (less effectively than Mark Lane).

Here's a bit that makes some sense: "Conspiracy is now the true faith. This means it is almost time for another shift. If, twenty years ago, it was the most clear-thinking and farseeing among us [us?!] who insisted on conspiracy, we are probably nearing the time when the shrewdest, the most rational analysts will begin to build a case for Oswald as the lone assassin - an Oswald different from the man in the Warren Report but a lone gunman nonetheless, a man with links to intelligence agencies but not necessarily guided by them, a man more childlike and lost than most theorists will today concede."

51. 9 Dec 83 (East Bay Express) "Who Shot JFK?" [2 pp.] A striking example of the kind of anniversary coverage which managed to avoid talking about the Kennedy assassination. These musings on conspiratorialism appear in the guise of a report on a Berkeley lecture by Paul Kangas, who in 1963 was "a 22-year-old member of Kennedy's Naval Honor Guard." Kangas (a.k.a. the Northwest Assassination Research Committee) is, I am told, an offshoot of the Depperman spinoff of the Weberman faction, retaining as a central item of faith the identification of Hunt and Sturgis as two of the tramps.

I share the author's surprise that nobody in the audience of 300 laughed at Kangas, but there are reasons for this kind of reaction which are worth some serious attention. My sympathy goes to anyone exposed to Kangas's mega-theories without a good knowledge of the factual and historical roots of assassination buffery. A few years ago, I was talked into sharing a platform with Kangas at U.C. Berkeley, fortunately in front of a very small audience; it wasn't fun. I suppose it is easier to write about the local equivalent of Penn Jones, colorful-nesswise, than about the less dramatic buffs.

The author's real interest seems to be people who follow conspiracy theories. "After the assassination, you could turn on the radio and hear them. Late at night. They talked about conspiracy.... The calls came from retirement hotels, from payphones in taverns,... from bedrooms of the unhappily married. Conspiracy came naturally to the voices. Life had conspired against them. In the moment of Kennedy's death, the personal and the political embraced."

Not entirely unlike Rosenbaum, the author focuses on Oswald's peculiarities, which, by implication, can also be found in buffs. Over half of Kangas' audience was "white, male, and under thirty.... They looked clean-cut.... They looked like guys who play chess by mail, read sci fi, and belong to Mensa." Judith Moore, the author and stereotypist, is presumably not a white male. Asked about the makeup of his audience, Kangas said that "White males are besieged in this era ... and aren't sure what to do." In the famous photo with his rifle, Oswald's "lips crease in a funny half-smile.... What he looks like is a creep. Oswald.... That shudder of recognition showed me the way out of the conspiracy theory maze."

"Twenty years ago, Oswald made a good scapegoat. Now, he could not have done it. Now we see ourselves in him: losers, betrayers, treacherous wimps, potential assassins.... Whether there was or was not a conspiracy has, twenty years later, become almost beside the point. [Those] whose life stories left them feeling conspired against ... have now become eighty percent of the population.... And no one, except those young clean-cut white males in Kangas' audience, wants to know who did it."

52. 13 Dec 83 (Nat. Enq.) "Surprising results of readers' phone-in poll: 97% think there was a plot behind JFK's assassination" To me, the surprise is that 417 people spent 50¢ to tell the Enquirer they thought there was not a plot. Bud Fensterwald is quoted: "President Lincoln's comment that 'you can't fool all the people all the time' is applicable.... We should set up a congressional committee and subpoena every piece of paper the government has. When that happens, we'll have the leads to solve this case quickly."

53. Jan 84 (J. Forensic Sci.) "The Exhumation and Identification of Lee Harvey Oswald," by Linda Norton et al. [11 pp.] This makes it official - it's Oswald. Since I have never been impressed by any of the evidence in favor of Eddowes' hypothesis, this paper provides more convincing than I need. I'll leave discussion of it to Gary Mack. If you really want a clear reproduction of photos of Oswald's teeth as of 1981, the address for official reprint requests is given in the following item.

54. Mar 84 (Coverups) "Yep, it's him - pathologists release Oswald report" A commentary and analysis by Gary Mack. [4 pp.] Several issues were not dealt with to Mack's satisfaction, including Oswald's height, the craniotomy saw cut (mentioned but not discussed in much detail), and the authenticity of the Marine dental X-rays.

55. 21 Jan 84 (SFC) "No heroes today" A letter from a man who was only eight at the time of the assassination, lamenting the current absence of leaders like JFK.

56. 1 Feb 84 (SFC) "A man who bird-dogs psychics" [2 pp.] Remember hearing about Jeane Dixon's prediction of the assassination? What she actually said was just that the 1960 election would be won by a Democrat, who would be assassinated or die in office, "though not necessarily in his first term."

57. 26 & 30 Mar 84 (UPI & WP) Brief obituaries for Secret Service agent Roy H. Kellerman, mentioning that he was in the car when JFK was shot. Kellerman, who was 69 years old, retired in 1968, having become assistant administrator of the service.

58. 20 Apr 84 (DTH) "Dallas super-sleuth Will Fritz dies at 88" [2 pp., including brief AP and UPI obituaries] Gus Rose, who worked for Fritz in 1963, said he was "a perfectionist." Sheriff Don Byrd said Fritz "had an unusual

ability to see beyond what had happened at the scene of a crime and grasp why it had occurred." After interrogating Oswald (and keeping no notes), Fritz had called him "well-trained and determined."

- * 59. May 84 (Hustler) "The Bullet That Really Killed John Kennedy" [2 pp.] A "guest editorial" by Harold Rydberg (now a medical illustrator at UNC - Chapel Hill) who made the WC drawings of JFK's wounds from Dr. Humes' verbal descriptions. On the basis of the trajectory and the head snap, Rydberg believes that the fatal shot came from the front. He mentions the existence of "coverup theories" but does not comment on Lifton's. Rydberg is not in the indexes to the HSCA volumes; his direct knowledge of the state of mind of Humes and others in early 1964 might be significant.

Rydberg says that he was "forbidden access" to all the relevant photos and X-rays in 1964. "Over the years I have made numerous requests" to Nixon, Ford, Agnew, and Edward Kennedy, "asking to be allowed to see the photographs and X-rays to check the accuracy of the drawings. For all my efforts I have received only a series of frustrating runarounds." Burke Marshall offered access under the condition that Rydberg "not talk about or redraw" what he saw. Rydberg does not seem familiar with the autopsy material released by the HSCA.

- * 60. 17 May 84 "Questions and speculations regarding CIA handling of Mexico City evidence" [4 pp.] Unpublished comments by Phil Melanson, based on Summers' remarks about a suppressed Mexico City photo (#1984.1). "Doesn't it make sense that CIA would work hard [possibly even before the assassination] to identify either the impostor or the companions?" (My understanding, by the way, is that the photo in question was of the real Oswald; I don't have any solid information on the possibility that the photo included companions.) "If the photo was of the real Oswald alone or of Oswald with pro-Castro people, the Agency should have been most anxious to release it and thereby help to validate its claim about what actually happened in Mexico City.... Is it possible that some of this evidence was preserved (or may still be?) because it has significance or utility for other machinations...? If an unknown number of living CIA officers have direct knowledge of this and related evidence, then evidentiary trails to the conspiracy still exist and the HSCA Mexico City report could be one of the few documents which could provide solid investigative leads." Your ideas are solicited, by Melanson and by me.

* Hurt book delayed:

Reader's Digest has decided not to publish Henry Hurt's book, "Reasonable Doubt." Hurt has permission to look for another publisher, and he is doing so. Loose ends are being tied up, but the book is basically finished.

Publication of an excerpt in the June issue was cancelled just as its announcement was going to press. In a relatively few copies of the May issue, the first of three excerpts was listed under "Coming Next Month." "This book explains why the skepticism grows, and offers fresh insights and new information that lead to an unavoidable conclusion: a conspiracy killed JFK." The later copies touted, instead, "Nicotine gum: the drug that helps smokers quit." (For both versions of this page, ask me for #61.)

The decision not to publish was made by Kenneth Gilmore, who replaced Edward Thompson as editor-in-chief of the magazine in March. I have no reason to suspect that the book caused or contributed to the firing of Thompson. According to Hurt, Gilmore reviewed the manuscript and did not find its conclusions completely persuasive. He felt that the Digest should not publish the book since he was not completely comfortable with it and was not prepared to defend it fully. I understand that Hurt has enough controversial material to preclude his conclusions being called "unavoidable." The Digest did not retain control of the manuscript and prohibit publication elsewhere (an option which I assume it did have).

There are "political" differences between Thompson and Gilmore, but I know of none clear-cut enough to make their positions on the JFK case predictable. I have several articles on events at the Digest, but none yet which discuss Hurt's book. According to the NYT, "a sense took hold that Mr. Thompson was unresponsive to suggestions" that the magazine "emphasize what [co-founder DeWitt] Wallace had called 'art of living' articles," heavy on optimism and self-reliance. (See #63.) Some eyebrows were raised by an article in the April 1984 issue, commissioned by Thompson from Carl Rowan, which criticized Reagan's censorship policies. "Mr. President, This Isn't Russia" was "a marked departure from the magazine's usual support of Mr. Reagan."

Gilmore "played a major role in the magazine's publication of 'The Plot to Murder the Pope,'" by Claire Sterling. "In fact, covert action by the Soviet Union has been a particular interest of Mr. Gilmore's. In 1962 he co-authored 'The Great Deception,' a book he described ... as 'telling how the Kremlin took Cuba.'" (See #62.) On the other hand, Thompson is credited in "Legend" as a supporter and a "perceptive editor," so one would not have expected him to support a book which takes a quite different view of the JFK case, as he has done.

I have heard a totally unconfirmed (but plausible) rumor that Ed Epstein is not at all happy with Hurt's present position on the case. I really shouldn't spread gossip like that, but if it turns out that Epstein or his friends did say something about the book to the right people, remember that you read it here first.

The context of Thompson's forced resignation was a complicated power shift at higher levels. For paranoia buffs, there is a Rockefeller involved (Laurance, "in the powerful position of sole outside trustee" of the Reader's Digest Association; see #64), a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (Gilmore), and a death - but not a mysterious one; co-founder Lila Wallace was 94 years old.

62. 26 Mar 84 (NYT) "Digest editor resigns" (Quoted above) Mostly background on Gilmore. Among other things, he edited Gerald Ford's book, "A Time to Heal."

63. 1 Jun 84 (NYT) "At Reader's Digest, a fight over philosophy" [2 pp.] (Quoted above) [#63B: photos]

64. 25 Jun 84 (Fortune) "Intrigue behind the ivy at Reader's Digest" [3 pp.] Focuses on the Digest's alleged financial problems, its organizational structure, and the events leading to the firing of Thompson.

65. 25 Jun 84 A letter from the Digest, responding to my pretext inquiry (included) about the missing excerpt. "After careful review," Gilmore "decided that it was preferable to use other book features available to us."

66. Jul-Aug 84 (Columbia Journ. Rev.) A reportedly good article (which I haven't yet seen), with a mention of (but not much detail on) the Hurt book.

Other books:

67. 27 Apr 84 (Pub. Wkly.) A brief review of "The Kennedys: Dynasty and Disaster, 1848-1983," by Bouvier cousin John H. Davis. According to this review, the book is expensive (\$24.95 [McGraw-Hill]), "curious," and "opinionated," with lots of "mostly familiar gossip."

There are several chapters relating to the assassinations, with quite a bit on DeMohrenschildt. I haven't read it all yet, but I am told that the book is a bit quirky and that not much on the case is new. Davis is generally sympathetic to the buffs and our theories. His conclusions seem to reflect those of Harris Wofford, who reviewed the manuscript, and of Prof. Blakey, who discussed the case in "at least a dozen lengthy telephone interviews." (For Wofford's analysis of what RFK might have known or feared, see 3 EOC 4, p. 9.) Unfortunately, Davis' book has no footnotes.

At first glance, I gather that there is not very much on the assassinations in "The Kennedys: An American Drama," by David Horowitz and Peter Collier.

By the way, a couple of people have pointed out the following to me, as

one of Davis' new items. Davis describes as not previously made public an FBI document reporting an allegation that an alleged associate of Vincent Marcello took part in a conversation in March 1963 about killing JFK with a \$12.98 foreign-made rifle. One "professor" (Ferrie?) was supposedly involved. Robert Ranftel remembered that the story was in the AIB collection of FBI documents from the 1977-78 releases. This looks to me like a typically unimpressive post-assassination allegation by an intrinsically unreliable source. For the relevant 4 pages from AIB items 780 and 785, ask me for #68. These pages include some followup of which Davis is unaware, and what appears to be the accidentally undeleted name of the FBI's informant.

A new newsletter:

Warren Graham has sent me the first issue (April 1984) of the newsletter of his "November 22nd Society." The price is right - \$8 per year for a bimonthly newsletter; write to him at 5031 Knoll Ridge Court, Charlotte, NC 28208. Graham hopes to arrange periodic get-togethers, to put researchers in touch with each other, and to distribute copies of articles. For his introductory comments, ask for #69 [2 pp.] The first issue also contains some anti-SBT analysis by Graham and various clippings, old and new. (If you must get all of N22SN #1 from me, ask for #70 [15 pp.])

Jean R. Souetre:

71. 22 Nov 83 (Nat. Enq., included in #37) "Is This the Man Who Killed JFK?" [2 pp.] Based in part on "explosive new court papers," i.e. information submitted by Bud Fensterwald. Dr. Alderson has repeated his claim that FBI agents who interviewed him said they "felt Souetre had either killed JFK or knew who did it." (I find it unlikely that FBI agents would tell an interview subject something like that, especially if they believed it.) The Enquirer questioned Souetre, formerly an OAS captain and now a casino operator in France. He denied involvement, but said he had "learned that a vicious French criminal named Michel Mertz was in Dallas the day JFK was shot and 'may well have been involved.' But incredibly, 'Michel Mertz' is an alias Souetre himself has used, according to the FBI!"

72. 1 Jan 84 (Le Quotidien, Paris) "This 'French Terrorist' Accused of Murdering Kennedy" [5 pp., English translation] A critical report on the above Enquirer story, based in part on comments by Souetre. He called Fensterwald's report (#1982.157, presumably) "a tissue of unlikelihoods which blend, in a crafty juggling of names, dates and other facts from sources devoted to systematic disinformation." The newspaper says "one must admit that the document is not one whose seriousness is of first quality." There is quite a bit on Mertz's shady past; the reporter seems to agree with Souetre that Mertz should be questioned.

73. 1 Jan 84 [2 pp.] The French original of the previous item.

74. (undated, 6 pp.) A summary of an interview of Souetre.

75. (undated, in French, 6 pp.) A summary of information on Mertz, allegedly of official origin.

76. (undated, unidentified, untranslated, barely legible) A brief news story alleging (I think) that someone who helped Fensterwald in France had a connection to the KGB.

77. 21 Nov 83 (Montreal Gazette) "JFK killing had city connection" A column on Fensterwald and the origins of the Souetre story by Nick Auf Der Maur. An OAS member (apparently Michel Roux) told a journalist that he had been in Dallas on 11/22, was expelled 18 hours later, and knew the details of the shooting. This story, with a Montreal byline, was published in an obscure French newspaper in February 1964.

I've never been able to get very interested in the Souetre story. Since several EOC readers take it seriously, I've listed these items now.

A little history and some uses of it: JFK and Castro, assassination plots (real and notional), and terrorism (counter- and plain)

78. 3 Nov 83 (SFC) A letter to the editor, wondering "why Camelot nostalgia buffs ... find it so easy to ridicule President Reagan's successful liberation of Grenada. JFK never minced words about the threat of Russian-Marxist aggression worldwide.... Had not a Russian/Cuban indoctrinated hit man killed him, he might be right here cheering and directing the mop-up."

On April 15, Reagan approvingly quoted some of JFK's strongly anti-Communist rhetoric from the time of the Bay of Pigs. Can anyone provide an exact quote? (This was on Reagan's regular Saturday morning radio broadcast.)

79. 22 Mar 84 (SFC) "The Baffling French President" Mentioned in passing: "[Francois] Mitterand's reputation suffered badly many years ago, when he was accused of having organized a bogus assassination attempt against himself, presumably to gain sympathy. He denied the allegation, but the episode has never been clarified." Can someone tell us more?

Also of interest to fans of Robin Ramsay's speculations (6 EOC 1, p. 9): according to an unconfirmed account of a December 21 item on CNN, a S.F. psychic predicted (at a Commonwealth Club dinner) that a pro-Castro terrorist would try to assassinate the President in 1984, and that Reagan would survive the attack.

80. 12 Feb 84 (WP) "Covert hit teams might evade Presidential ban" against assassinations. The FBI and CIA directors reportedly oppose covert retaliation against terrorists. "Some CIA and military officials argue that the most effective way to retaliate - with the fewest mistakes and fewest innocent victims - is through a surgical strike by a hit team ... probably composed of U.S. military personnel or even foreign nationals." They would definitely have a point if the official definition of terrorists were not so flexible.

81. 26 Mar 84 (NYT in DFP) "Soviets have death squads, defector says" They would be targeted against leaders in case of war.

82. 16 Apr 84 (LAT in SFC) "U.S. to take the offensive against terrorists abroad" [2 pp.] Reagan has "signed a policy directive."

* 83. 22 Apr 84 (Knight News in SFX) "CIA policy makes terrorists a target" [2 pp.] Plans for infiltration, pre-emptive strikes, and direct reprisals have been "modeled on Israeli techniques." According to "one longtime intelligence specialist," "Some of our people may have to be a part of low-level assassinations and will have to keep their mouths shut to protect their cover." A congressional source also suggested another possible indirect U.S. role in assassinations. Cuban President Fidel Castro, for example,... may be back on a hit list for non-Americans, possibly with the unspoken acquiescence of the CIA."

84. 30 Mar 84 (UPI) "Castro tells of Kennedy letter," in an interview with Tad Szulc in Parade. Not a letter, actually; just the message passed through Jean Daniel. (This isn't the first time UPI has treated old information as news.)

85. 1 Apr 84 (Parade) "Friendship is possible, but..." [4 pp.] The Szulc article referred to in the previous item.

86. 30 Mar 84 (USA Today) McPaper's short account of the Parade story.

* 87. 15 Apr 84 (LAT) "Castro on John Kennedy and the Missile Crisis," by Tad Szulc [3 pp.] Castro told Szulc "I do not hold Kennedy responsible for Giron [the Bay of Pigs] because this idea emerged much earlier.... I don't believe he was an unscrupulous man." JFK was new and inexperienced, but intelligent, "with magnificent personal qualities." You don't have to believe that Castro knocked off JFK to suspect a lack of candor here. A possible explanation: "If Castro was convinced that a dialogue with the United States was feasible in Kennedy's days, as he told me repeatedly, then the possibility of a dialogue with ... Reagan should not be ruled out."

Szulc told Castro how, in November 1961, JFK asked him to the White House "in [my] capacity as a private citizen ... [and] posed a stunning question: How would I react if he ordered the Cuban leader's assassination? I expressed my sense of shock at this idea, and Kennedy told me that he, too, opposed it on moral

grounds. However, he added, he was under great pressure from the intelligence community to order Castro killed. Thus he was seeking outside views. Though this account was published 10 years ago in the United States, Castro hadn't read it." (I'm skeptical of that also.) Castro "listened transfixed" and then brought up the "great coincidence" between Szulc's story and the contact with Jean Daniel.

When Scott et al. reprinted Szulc's 1974 article in "The Assassinations," we didn't challenge his interpretation of JFK's position. As Powers has suggested, however, if JFK was firmly against killing Castro, he would be unlikely to tell Szulc about it. (Helms book, p. 345) (Unless, I would add, he wanted Szulc to leak the story and kill the plot.) It is also possible that JFK was far from candid with Szulc, especially considering a little-known fact buried in a footnote on page 138 of the Church Committee report on plots against foreign leaders. (#88) A week before the meeting, Dick Goodwin suggested to JFK and RFK that Szulc be brought into the Mongoose operation, evidently to run the propaganda part. The meeting (which Goodwin attended) looks in retrospect like a job interview, although Szulc presumably didn't know that. (Goodwin conceded it might have been.) I wonder if Szulc would have been offered a job if he had given a different answer to JFK's question about killing Castro.

Speaking of plots against Castro:

89. 15 Mar 63 (Wall Street Journal) "Washington Wire" A collection of short items: "Kennedy's hopes for better fortunes have real basis. Aides radiate confidence.... Castro's assassination becomes the major U.S. hope for de-communizing Cuba. Some officials maintain rising public discontent is bound to bring a successful assassination attempt sooner or later." Why haven't we heard much about this item, compared to Castro's September "threat"? Maybe because Oswald did not subscribe to the Wall Street Journal. But:

90. 19 Mar 63 (The Worker) A quote from that WSJ article, prominently displayed on page 2. (This is the midweek edition, which Oswald's subscription evidently did include; see CE 1145 and CE 1172.)

91. 17 Mar 63 (The Worker) What was the CPUSA line? In this article and editorial on Cuba [2 pp.], JFK was not the villain. The usual collection of right-ists are at it again, with an "attack, directed in the first place against Kennedy. ... These dangerous elements do not agree with Kennedy when he declares that 'we do not believe that war in the Caribbean is to the national advantage.' ... President Kennedy should take a lesson from this. The only way to halt the ultra-Right is to resist them." And what should a reader of The Worker do? "Write to President Kennedy...." Undoubtedly much of the CPUSA leadership was not really that sympathetic to JFK, but if you want to argue that Oswald was incited by the Commies, you have to take this kind of material into account.

92. 26 Mar 84 (Liz Smith, in DFP) "Author links Kennedys to Fidel Castro death plot" John Davis "says he did locate important new sources that 'authoritatively link Robert Kennedy, and by extension, Jack Kennedy'" to the AM/LASH plot. In the book (pp. 410-3), Davis reports that Thomas Hughes (then of State) told him "he had not the slightest doubt" that RFK knew of and supported that plot. Former CIA official Samuel Halpern, "one of the four men directly involved in the AM/LASH operation," said he was certain that Des Fitzgerald "had full authorization" from RFK and JFK to proceed with the plot. "Was it possible that the Kennedy brothers could have been discussing rapprochement with Castro and planning his assassination at the same time? Judging from what evidence we have, I believe it was well within their modus operandi." (I'm inclined to agree that the moves toward rapprochement do not rule out Kennedy involvement in assassination plots.)

Credits: Thanks to J. Braun (#44), B. Fensterwald (71-6), J. Goldberg (33, 36, 47A, 57, 58B, 80, 86), W. Graham (69-70), L. Haapanen (31), L. Harris (58), G. Hollingsworth (32, 53, 59, 67, 84, 87), H. Irwin (50), G. Mack (46, 54), P. Melanson (60), J. Mierzejewski (81, 92), F. Newcomb (47B), R. Ranftel (49, 68), C. Scally (43), P. Scott (77), G. Shaw (61), and D. White (79B).